

**Soldiers** *Online*

# Putting Transformation Into Practice

Story by Steve Harding

## **T**TRANSFORMATION.

Though the term that defines the wide-ranging changes in store for the 21st-century Army is still little more than a buzzword for most soldiers, it's an every-day reality for troops of the 2nd Infantry Division's 3rd Brigade.

In April 2000 the Fort Lewis, Wash.-based unit was tapped to become the Army's Initial Brigade Combat Team. Since then its soldiers and Department of the Army civilians — assisted by advisers from several major Army commands, civilian contractors and other Fort Lewis units — have worked long and hard to put transformation's theories into practice. It has been, according to insiders, a process both challenging and exhilarating.

### **A New Type of Unit**

Born of the Army's need to fill a known operational gap between the capabilities of its quickly deployable but lightly armed light forces and the more robust but slower to deploy heavier forces, the Interim Brigade

Combat Team concept envisions highly mobile combined-arms organizations that use advanced technologies and innovative tactics to maximize their combat punch.

The brigades — six of which have so far been identified — will be able to deploy anywhere in the world within 96 hours, and will be able to handle a range of missions across the full spectrum of conflict.

To achieve the necessary flexibility, the IBCTs will each consist of three infantry battalions; a reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition squadron; an artillery battalion; a support battalion; military intelligence, signal, antitank and engineer companies; and a "nonlethal fires cell" with civil affairs, psychological operations and public affairs components. Each IBCT will have about 3,500 soldiers, slightly less than in a heavy brigade and slightly more than in a light brigade.

This "middle weight" status

reflects each IBCT's intended role as an early entry force, rather than a forced-entry one, said David Kuhns of Fort Lewis' Transformation Public Affairs Office.

"Somebody else — rangers, or the 82nd Airborne Division's ready brigade — will jump in and seize the airfield, and the IBCT will follow," he said. "The brigade will come in prepared to operate for up to 72 hours with its basic combat load."

After that initial operating period the IBCT will obtain its logistical support primarily from the brigade support battalion, and then from whatever higher headquarters the IBCT finds itself working for, thus reducing its own logistical "tail," Kuhns said.

"The idea is that the IBCT will



**As symbolized by this distinctive statue near its main gate, Fort Lewis has long been a leader in putting innovative tactics and equipment to practical use.**

All photos courtesy Fort Lewis Transformation PAO unless otherwise credited.

have far more ‘tooth’ and less ‘tail’ than a similar-sized conventional unit,” he said, “meaning that the ratio of combat power to logistical support will be greater.”

That change is probably most apparent in the reduced size of the IBCT’s support battalion, Kuhns said. “In a traditional heavy brigade the FSB used to be fairly large, and now it’s about half the size of an infantry battalion. That makes for greater responsiveness and increased mobility.”

Another key element in the IBCTs’ mobility is the replacement of traditional armored vehicles by air-trans-



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**Among the most innovative — and controversial — aspects of the IBCT concept is the introduction of several variants of the LAV-III light armored vehicle.**

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portable, lightly armored wheeled vehicles outfitted to perform a variety of missions.

After a lengthy and often contentious evaluation of several types of vehicles, the Army selected the General Motors-General Dynamics Land Systems LAV-III as the basis for the IBCT's Infantry Carrier Vehicle and Mobile Gun System. The former will be the basis for eight additional variants — everything from a command vehicle to a mortar carrier — while the Mobile Gun System will pack a hard-hitting 105mm gun. All told, the IBCT will field 308 armored vehicles. In addition, the IBCT's artillery battalion will field a towed 155mm gun, and the entire brigade will continue to use Humvees and various examples of the Family of Military Tactical Vehicles.

And enhanced mobility is just the

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**Reflecting the Army's belief that soldiers — not new vehicles and equipment — are the core of transformation, IBCT raining still focuses heavily on traditional soldier skills.**

beginning. The IBCT also incorporates a range of state-of-the-art communications, command-and-control, and reconnaissance and surveillance systems.

Woven together into a brigade-wide information net, these systems are intended to give IBCT soldiers — from brigade commander to squad leader — an unprecedented level of situational awareness. This enhanced ability to gather and disseminate

information, coupled with the ability to quickly and securely communicate the IBCT commander's intentions throughout the brigade, will allow the unit to dominate the 50 by 50 square kilometer zone that is expected to be its normal area of operations.

Taken as a whole, the IBCT concept is a bold and innovative step forward for the Army. And it is up to the soldiers of Fort Lewis' 3rd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div.

— and, beginning in January, to those of the post's 1st Bde., 25th Inf. Div. — to prove that the concept is both practical and achievable.

## Transformation Comes to Fort Lewis

A military post since 1917 and home to the Army's I Corps, Fort Lewis was a logical place to base the Army's first two IBCTs, Kuhns said.

"This is really an ideal installation

# A Cooperative Effort

**T**HE first IBCT is essentially being built from the ground up, with new goals, new doctrine, new equipment and new training. In addition to the concerns normally associated with activating a new unit — acquiring personnel and equipment on time, for example — is the need to establish the doctrine and tactics the unit will employ; determine the training its soldiers will need; evaluate and assess the doctrine, tactics and training;

modify each of them as necessary; and then communicate the necessary information to the agencies concerned.

Creating the IBCT thus requires the collective support of several major Army commands, agencies and schools. And it is through the Brigade Coordination Cell that those organizations coordinate the training, equipping and evaluation of the IBCT.

The organizations represented in the BCC include Training and Doc-

trine Command; Army Test and Evaluation Cmd.; and Army Materiel Cmd. Each organization has a piece of the IBCT "pie," said MSG James D. Hardesty, a TRADOC representative in the BCC. The BCC also collectively coordinates the efforts of such proponents as the infantry, armor and field artillery schools, Forces Cmd., I Corps and others.

For example, the TRADOC cell is a liaison between the brigade and the





**Extensive field training is helping soldiers of the 3rd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div., determine how best to operate, support and employ the LAV-III. Canada has loaned the Army 32 of the vehicles, which retain their Canadian forces markings and number plates.**

doctrine developers at each of the schoolhouses, and works closely with I Corps in developing training strategies for the IBCTs.

“The Army Materiel Cmd. cell manages the fielding of the more than 7,000 items — from the Interim Armored Vehicles to individual weapons — that will eventually be part of the two Fort Lewis-based IBCTs. And because advanced communications and command-and-control systems are such an integral art of the IBCT concept, there is also a coordination team from the Signal Center and School at Fort Gordon, Ga.,” said MSG Patrick Jeffries, the BCC’s maneuver operations sergeant.

“With this kind of radically new

organization, we don’t know what we don’t know,” said MSG Michael Abbey, the BCC representative of the Army Test and Evaluation Cmd. “We’ve got an idea of how things should be done, but it’s a constantly changing process. So our collective mission here at Fort Lewis is essentially to determine if the IBCT’s equipment, personnel, doctrine and training are suited to the missions envisioned for the brigade.”

“And it’s not just these outside agencies coming in and telling the brigade what to do and how to do it,” Hardesty said. “It really is a two-way process. And when some of the recommendations we

make don’t work out, the units often have suggestions on how things should be done instead.”

For example, Hardesty said, ambush techniques have long been taught in a certain way. Yet the advent of new technologies — especially the “Internetting” of the battlefield — means that more assets can be brought to bear during an ambush, thus changing the way ambushes are conducted, at least by the soldiers of the IBCT.

“So we actually had to have members of the infantry battalions teach the Infantry School representatives how the traditional training has been modified to better



*(continued on p. 8)*

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**Another innovative system being brought into the IBCT is the Hunter unmanned aerial vehicle, which will be employed by the brigade's RSTA component.**

from which to project the nation's military power. The Port of Tacoma is just down the road in case we need to deploy units by sea, and McChord Air Force Base's heavy-lift aircraft are literally right next door," he said. "In addition, we have extensive training areas both here and at Yakima Training Center."

As logical as Fort Lewis' selection might have been, those who were to

oversee the creation of the first IBCT knew that it would not be an easy task.

"How could it be?" said BG Thomas Goedkoop, Fort Lewis' deputy commanding general for training and readiness. "We're transforming a heavy brigade into a new type of unit that will be doing a range of new tasks, with totally different equipment, interacting with organizations that didn't exist before, and using

doctrine that is completely different in many regards from the doctrine it used as a heavy brigade. It's bound to be challenging."

Indeed, Goedkoop said, he made a point of emphasizing the potential challenges to the brigade's leaders when the transformation announcement was made.

"If you're hoping to operate in an environment of certainty, go somewhere else," Goedkoop told the leaders. "This will be the ultimate work in progress. Things are going to change, and you'll have less notice of that than you'd like. This process is going to be hot, heavy and action-packed. You've got to be flexible of mind, and your units have got to be agile and trained well enough to react fast enough to the competing demands of some 30 organizations that will be continuously beaming in information and requirements."

"Close coordination among the various agencies and installations involved in the transformation process

use the enhanced capabilities of a transformed infantry unit," Hardesty said.

The evolutionary approach to IBCT training also holds true for its organization and equipment.

For example, the 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry, provides the IBCT's reconnaissance, surveillance and target-acquisition, or RSTA, capability.

"With three reconnaissance troops and a surveillance troop — which is equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles and ground-surveillance radar — the squadron provides the brigade commander with an organic, real-time intelligence picture of his area of



responsibility," said SFC Jeff Boelter, the BCC's RSTA operations sergeant. "The Modified Table of Organization and Equipment undergoes constant review to ensure that the units get what they need, and that the things they don't need are removed."

But as important as the new equipment is, Jeffries said, properly preparing the IBCT's soldiers for their mission must ultimately be the BCC's first priority.

"Transformation isn't just about giving a couple of IBCTs a lot of whiz-bang toys and new vehicles to ride around on," he said. "It's what we expect our soldiers to be able to do. We're training soldiers and

leaders to be able to take the commander's intent and use their own initiative to accomplish the mission. All of the new equipment and advanced technologies are simply intended to enhance our soldiers' traditional skills and give all our tactical leaders — down to company and platoon level — the real-time information they need to make the best possible decisions in any given situation.

"Bear in mind," Jeffries said, "that here at Fort Lewis we're working to create the interim force. This is just the first step toward getting us — the entire Army — to the objective force. It's a bold step, and everyone involved in the process is committed to its success." — *Steve Harding*



has been imperative,” Goedkoop said. “We’ve competed for resources — equipment fielding priority, digitally experienced personnel and knowledgeable contractor support — with such other Army priorities as the first digital division at Fort Hood. It has required that all external organizations and our team here at Fort Lewis balance competing needs for the good of the installation.”

The establishment at Fort Lewis of a Brigade Coordination Cell was especially important in ensuring the necessary inter-agency cooperation, Goedkoop said. Staffed by representatives from U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, the Army Test and Evaluation Command and Army Materiel Command, the BCC is a bridge between the 3rd Bde. and the many agencies tasked with acquiring and fielding the brigade’s equipment, writing its doctrine and training its soldiers [see box beginning on p. 28].

“Everybody involved in the transformation process here at Fort

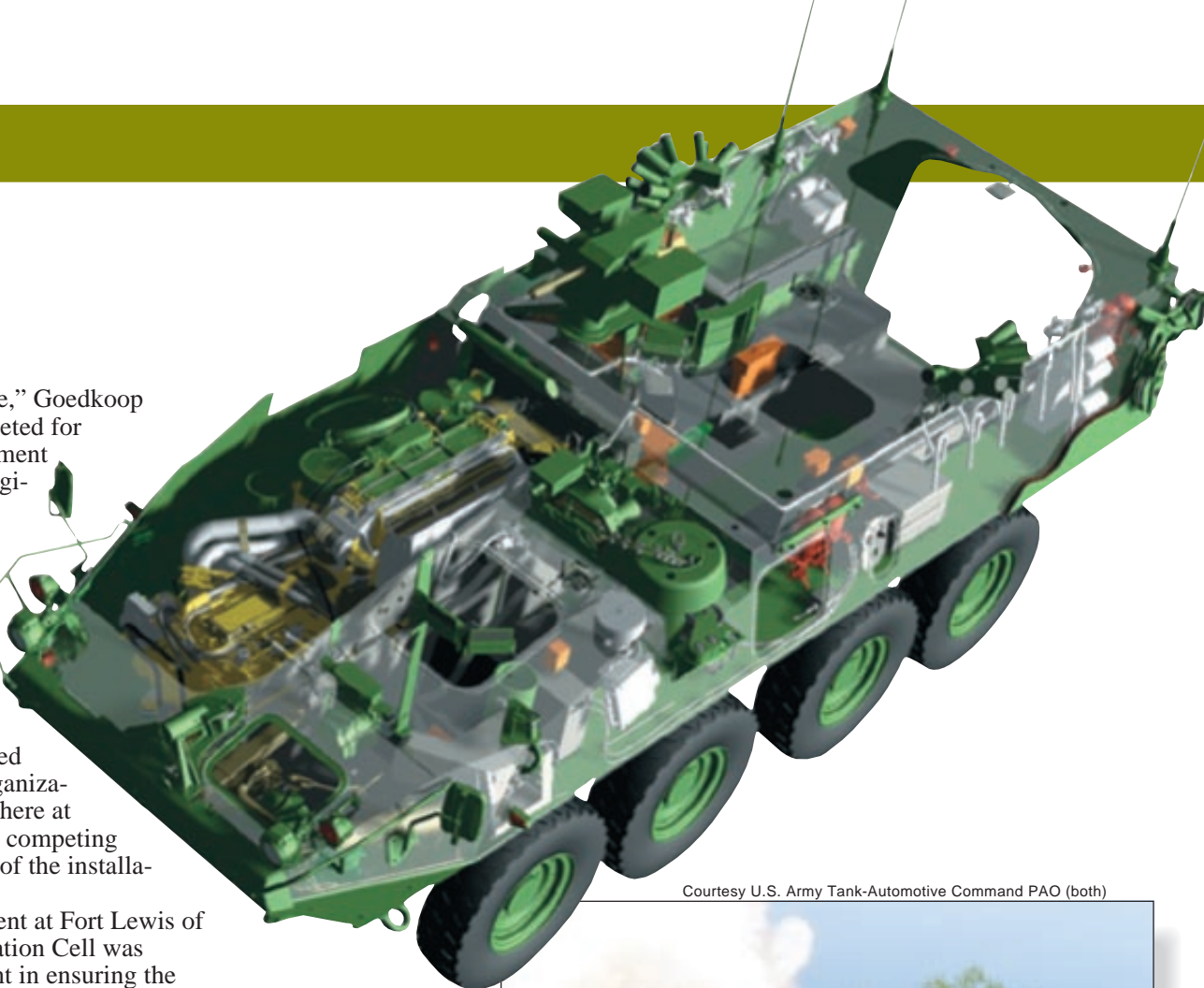
Lewis has been pulling together,” Goedkoop said, “and we’ve had a tremendous amount of support from the garrison staff and other Fort Lewis units.”

That support is especially important, he said, given the extensive infrastructure changes that the transformation process has brought Fort Lewis. These include the reorganization of unit areas and upgrade of barracks, the establishment of additional motorpool facilities, the construction of new MOUT live-fire ranges and the opening of the state-of-the-art Mission Support Training Facility [see story beginning on p. 34].

## The Process at Work

The most important changes transformation has brought to Fort Lewis are, of course, those that have

Courtesy U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command PAO (both)



**The standard LAV-III (top) forms the basis for several variants the IBCT will employ. Also based on the LAV-III, the Mobile Gun System (above) packs a hard-hitting 105mm gun that will give the medium-weight IBCT a heavyweight punch.**



**The FBCB2 system provides the IBCT with enhanced situational awareness to the lowest tactical level — the individual soldier.**

engulfed the 2nd ID’s 3rd Bde. The unit, originally a heavy brigade equipped with M1 Abrams tanks, first had to identify and turn in equipment and some 300 vehicles it would not be using in its new role. It then had to begin accepting the tools of its new trade.

“We’re talking about literally thousands of pieces of equipment across the brigade,” Goedkoop said.

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**SSG Arquallia Farr of the 5th Bn., 20th Inf., introduces PFC Rob Saucier to the LAV-III. IBCT soldiers at Fort Lewis have had to acquaint themselves with 47 new systems as part of the transformation process.**

“Getting all that materiel ready for turn in, reorganizing personnel, standing up new units and accepting 47 new systems since May of 2000 — it’s been an immense task.”

And acquiring the new systems was just the beginning, because the brigade’s soldiers also began the training required to integrate each system into the unit’s inventory — training that included field exercises, live-fires, simulations and repeated visits to Fort Lewis’ military operations on urbanized terrain sites.

Much of the training focused on the LAV-IIIs, 32 examples of which are on loan from the Canadian army pending the scheduled 2002 arrival of the first U.S. variants. The brigade’s soldiers have been using the LAVs to develop crew drills, packing lists, load plans, emergency procedures, and overall tactics, techniques and procedures for

employing the light armored vehicles and their dismounted infantrymen.

## The Soldiers’ View

If the creation of the Army’s first IBCT is an Armywide effort, the actual execution of the overall transformation plan is up to the brigade’s soldiers. They are the ones who have to turn the theories into practice and, for the most part, it’s a process they enjoy.

“This whole transformation process is really interesting,” said SPC Joseph Cain, a machine-gunner in Co. C, 5th Battalion, 20th Inf. “The way warfare is changing, we have to keep refining our skills and adapting to whatever changes the enemy introduces. Every new piece of equipment the Army is issuing to us now will help us in the long run.”

“I’ve been enjoying the process since day one,” added SPC Jeremiah Hochstedler, a team leader in Co. C. “Though in one sense the skills we use as infantrymen haven’t changed that much since World War II — things

like weapons proficiency and battle drills — the tools have evolved. And it’s great to be a part of that evolution, and to help write the book on how the IBCT trains and fights.”

Working with the LAV has been of particular interest to many of the brigade’s soldiers, among them SGT Jeff Engels, a team leader in the 5th Bn.’s Co. B.

“Having the LAVs enhances our capabilities,” Engels said. “First, we can get from an assembly area or base camp out to a trouble spot faster. And having the vehicle provides a better level of safety for us.”

“In addition,” said Co. A team leader SPC Antonio Aguirre, “the vehicle is really easy to get into and out of, which is especially important if we’re operating in urban terrain. The rear ramp can be dropped in 3 seconds, and all nine soldiers in the back can be outside of the vehicle in 10 or 15 seconds.”

Of course, the challenges inherent in fielding an entirely new unit mean that there are also downsides to the transformation process.



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**Soldiers of the IBCT’s 1st Squadron, 14th Cavalry, prepare to move out on a dismounted scouting exercise. The unit uses a variety of methods to provide the brigade’s RSTA — reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition — capability.**



"It's like we're writing a whole new playbook," said SSG Jeffrey Self, a Co. B squad leader. "We're developing the rules as we go along, and that 'crawling' process can be a little frustrating when you're not able to get something right the first time."

And the new equipment can be challenging, too.

"New systems are great, but they sometimes don't hold up as well in action as they're supposed to," Hochstedler said. "Things get dirty and malfunction, or they don't work as advertised."

"But that's part of the reason we're training with all this stuff," he said. "Part of our job is to find out how well the systems and the doctrine work, and to pass on our suggestions on how to make them better."

Such soldier input is vital to the transformation process, Goedkoop said, and he's proud of the way the soldiers have stepped up to the task.

"I couldn't be happier with the way the brigade's soldiers have responded to the various challenges they've faced — and they've faced many," he said. "And I think that they enjoy being part of this process. I've always found that when soldiers are out doing what they signed up to do they enjoy it, do well at it and feel good about the part they play in it."

One concrete measure of how the 3rd Bde.'s soldiers feel about the Transformation process and their role in it, Goedkoop said, is the unit's retention rate.

"I've always felt that retention success is a good indicator of how soldiers feel about how well the unit is meeting their needs in terms of balancing the mission with quality-of-life issues," he said. "And throughout this process the 3rd Bde. has been well over 110 percent in its retention objectives. That's a pretty powerful statement about how the soldiers feel about being part of transformation here at Fort Lewis."



**The IBCT is intended to be an early entry force, meaning that it will bring in its 3,500 soldiers and hundreds of vehicles once initial-entry forces have seized an airhead. The brigade will be prepared to operate up to 72 hours with its basic combat load.**

## Keeping the Goal in Mind

Despite the challenges of transforming the 3rd Bde., Goedkoop said, everyone involved in the process has stayed focused on the ultimate goal: building an innovative and state-of-the-art military organization that gives well-trained and highly motivated soldiers the advanced tools and techniques they'll need to dominate the 21st-century battlefield.

"And the key point there is that, ultimately, transformation is about the soldier on the ground," he said. "All these new vehicles and systems are just here to make the soldier more effective at the point of the spear. You can have the best vehicle or best system in the world, but if you don't have the trained personnel and a focus on the soldier, then regardless of what you give him or her, it will not be used to its full potential. It's as simple as that." □



## Additional IBCTs Identified



**S**ECRETARY of the Army Thomas E. White has identified the next four units slated for transformation into Interim Brigade Combat Teams. They are, in order of their conversion:

- The 172nd Infantry Brigade at Forts Wainwright and Richardson, Alaska;
- The 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Polk, La.;
- The 2nd Bde., 25th Inf. Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii; and
- The Pennsylvania Army National Guard's 56th Brigade, 28th Inf. Div.

Transformation to IBCT status will take about a year for each of the three active-component units, White said, and about two years for the National

Guard brigade. The fielding of the new brigades could begin as early as 2004, depending on availability of the new Interim Armored Vehicle and on the outcome of an ongoing Army Programmatic Environmental Impact Study. — *Steve Harding*

